



Jolly Green maintainers hit gold

By 2nd Lt. Carla Pampe
AWFC Public Affairs

The 66th Rescue Squadron's maintenance unit earned top honors in Air Combat Command recently, winning the 2000 Maintenance Effectiveness Award for Rotary Wing Aircraft.

The squadron's primary mission is worldwide combat search and rescue, but that mission would be impossible without the support of a strong maintenance unit. "We've got 16 helicopters assigned to the 66th aircraft maintenance unit, and we support three different organizations – the 66th Rescue Squadron, the Weapons School and the 422nd Test and Evaluation Squadron," said Captain David Bouska, 66th RQS maintenance officer. "Our overall responsibility is to support everything about the airframe, from launch and recovery to every aspect of its maintenance."

Senior Airman John Teal, helicopter crew chief with the 66th RQS, explained the mission further.

"We support the combat search and rescue mission by providing quality air-

craft to the pilots and flight crew," Airman Teal said. "We accomplish this by doing periodic inspections and a lot of preventive maintenance."

Approximately 200 people work in maintenance at the rescue squadron. Capt. Bouska said there are a number of challenges his people face.

"I think the biggest challenge on the maintenance side is balancing the needs of all three units that we support," Capt. Bouska said. "We have operational commitments, too, in Turkey and Kuwait – we're deployed about 50 percent of the year."

Airman Teal said the busy pace can be hard on maintenance personnel.

"You're always on the go, it seems, and it's hard to get settled in," he said. "It's especially hard for the guys who have families."

"However, the first sergeant and commander have done a lot to help people keep in contact with their families, and recently we've started doing shorter deployment rotations," the airman said.

Capt. Bouska agrees that while there are challenges for maintenance crews,

there are also a lot of rewards.

"I think one of the biggest rewards is coming back from a successful deployment and knowing that your mission is important," Capt. Bouska said. "When I do my job right, Jolly goes airborne."

"It's got to feel different for the pilots and pararescuemen, but for them to be successful at their mission, maintenance must have the aircraft," he said.

Airman Teal has experienced firsthand being a part of a successful rescue.

"A couple of years ago, I got to launch out a rescue mission that actually saved someone's life," he said. "I knew I had helped get the aircraft ready to go, and it was very rewarding for me."

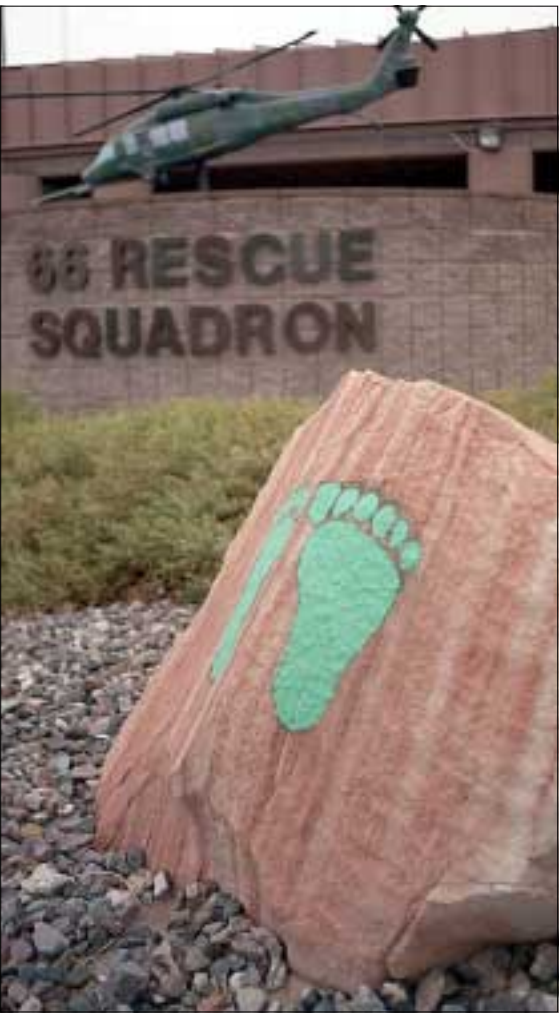
Airman Teal said he is proud of his work at the 66th. He also said a number of things contributed to his unit winning the Air Combat Command award.

"I think the biggest thing that helped us win is attention to detail – whether it be aircraft forms, doing inspections or having the right tools to do the job," said Airman Teal. "It was definitely a team effort. Nobody could do this job by themselves."



Above, Tech. Sgt. Mark Hodges, Weapons School, and Airman 1st Class Ken Morris, 66th Rescue Squadron, prepare for takeoff.

Left, Airman 1st Class Heather Thurston, 66th Rescue Squadron, troubleshoots the guidance system during a phase dock inspection. (Photos by Mr. John Broussard)



Above, the entrance to the 66th RQS shows their pride and dedication to the mission with a detail replica of the HH-60G and the Jolly Green Giant's footprints, their trademark symbol.

Below, Airman Thurston and 2nd Lt. Maria Soto inspect the guidance control systems on one of the aircraft. Thorough and frequent inspections are part of the winning combination that has earned them their award.



Above, an HH-60G sits on the ramp.

Left, Staff Sgt. Mike Jerro and Capt. David Bouska, both with the 66th RQS, discuss the maintenance schedule for HH-60G in the background.

